

Simmons Franklin

DRAWER 22

SCULPTORS-S  
(BUSTS)

Research  
# 565

71.2009.085.03109



# Statues of Abraham Lincoln

Franklin Simmons

Excerpts from newspapers and other  
sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection



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Rear 27 Parkview Avenue  
Meriden, Connecticut  
May 5, 1952

Lincoln National Life Foundation  
Fort Wayne, Indiana

Dear Sir:

Your name has been given to me as a collector of material and antiques concerning Abraham Lincoln.

Enclosed please find a true copy of a letter, dated April 25, 1952, from Sigmund Rothschild. Also enclosed is a picture of a 14" bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln cast in 1865 by William Miller & Company, Metallists, Providence, Rhode Island, and sculptured by Franklin Simmons.

I have this bust up for sale and I am contacting you to find out if you would be interested in purchasing same. The bust is in excellent condition, as you can see from the enclosed photograph. An appointment for a personal inspection of this bust may be had by calling Meriden 5-5606 between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., or Meriden 5-2711 after 5:00 p.m.

If you are interested in purchasing this piece of fine art, please contact me before May 28, 1952.

Sincerely yours,

*Chester Orsini*

CO/gah

Chester Orsini

Enclosure--2

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J.  
MARCH 19, 1918  
W. C. COOPER

RECEIVED MAR 20 1918 FROM THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

RECEIVED MAR 20 1918 FROM THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT  
BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
FOR INFORMATION  
TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
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PHOTOGRAPH BY  
ROBERT J. MURRAY

185 PARKER AVENUE  
MERIDEN, CONNECTICUT

SIGMUND ROTHSCHILD  
RESTORER

Circle 5-8270

ONE HUNDRED NINETEEN WEST FIFTY-SEVENTH STREET • NEW YORK NINETEEN, N. Y.

4-5-52

TENTATIVE VALUE ON BORN 25  
BUST OF A. Lincoln by F. Simmons  
AT THIS TIME SHOULD BE  
TWENTY FIVE hundred DOLLARS AT  
A RETAIL LEVEL FOR PURPOSE  
OF PLACING AN INSURANCE BINDER  
AT A PROPER LEVEL OF VALUE. FINAL  
VALUE TO BE DETERMINED - RATES  
BEING A DECIDING FACTOR

S. Rothchild



# SIGMUND ROTHSCHILD

RESTORER

Circle 5-8270

ONE HUNDRED NINETEEN WEST FIFTY-SEVENTH STREET • NEW YORK NINETEEN, N. Y.

April 25, 1952.

Mr. Chester Orsini  
142 Carter Avenue Extension  
Meriden, Connecticut.

Dear Mr. Orsini:

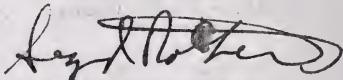
Your bronze head of Lincoln, which I have seen and studied with considerable interest, appears, in the light of my research, to be completely unique and original. The work of Franklin Simmons, it was done in either 1864 or 1865 and it was cast by William Miller & Co. in Providence in 1865. This was the only year that William Miller and his partner, Walter S. Dennis, were in business together.

I was able to check numerous collectors of Lincoln material in New York, Philadelphia, Washington, and Providence for records of this work. In addition, libraries as the Simmons Memorial in Webster, Maine were checked. Donald C. Durman, author of "He Belongs to the Ages", listing all recognized statues of Lincoln, confirmed to me the existance of a circular medallion of Lincoln which was given to the Providence Public Library in 1904 by Mrs. John W. Daniel. It was cast in 1865 by William Miller & Co. and a design patent registered for it. (July 18, 1865, #D 2139, Class 29, Sub-class 23, Fine Arts Sculpt.)

Mentioned in Appleton's "Cyclopaedia of American Biography" is the fact that Simmons worked in Washington in 1864 and 1865. Some other busts that he made were those of William T. Sherman, David D. Porter, Ulysses S. Grant, and statues of Roger Williams, William King, Oliver P. Morton, and Henry W. Longfellow.

As an individual and unique work, its value would be limited only by the desire and means of an collector anxious to obtain it.

Very truly yours,



Sigmund Rothschild

SR:ni ,



SIGMUND ROTHSCHILD  
Restorer

Circle 5-8270

One Hundred Nineteen West Fifty-Seventh Street . New York Nineteen, N. Y.

April 25, 1952.

Mr. Chester Orsini  
142 Carter Avenue Extension  
Meriden, Connecticut.

Dear Mr. Orsini:

Your bronze head of Lincoln, which I have seen and studied with considerable interest, appears, in the light of my research, to be completely unique and original. The work of Franklin Simmons, it was done in either 1864 or 1865 and it was cast by William Miller & Co. in Providence in 1865. This was the only year that William Miller and his partner, Walter S. Dennis, were in business together.

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As an individual and unique work, its value would be limited only by the desire and means of an collector anxious to obtain it.

A CERTIFIED TRUE COPY

Very truly yours,

S/Sigmund Rothschild

Sigmund Rothschild

Fine Art Restoration

Appraisals

Carlyle 11/22/52  
Carlyle 11/22/52

Digitized by srujanika@gmail.com

第二章 亂世之亂：民變與清廷的應對（1850-1864）

• 15 •

新編 一九四〇年九月  
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卷之三

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#### REFERENCES AND NOTES

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#### **REFERENCES**

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# Bust of Abe As Junk May Be Worth Fortune

few names stand in distinction in art. Madame Narcisa in music, Harry Brown and Philip Holmes in painting and Franklin Simmons in sculpture are about the only names that stand for fame in the different branches of art, while to offset them in literature is a great constellation of brilliant names which have given honor to American poetry, romance, history and letters.

One of the most eminent living sculptors is Franklin Simmons, a native of the little town of Webster over on the Androscoggin, but long a resident of No. 3 Via Veneto, Rome, Italy. He studied at Gaspard but is not a graduate, although three of the colleges of Maine have recognized his genius by bestowing upon him honorary degrees.

D. A. JONAH  
Librarian

BROWN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY  
PROVIDENCE 12, R. I.

GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT IS RETURNED FOR YOUR GIFT OF

Three photographs of bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln cast in 1865 by William Miller & Company of Providence and sculptured by Franklin Simmons.

David A. Jonah.  
Librarian

May 14, 1952

Simmons—which is far below the other work in point of merit and artistic conception and execution—includes his statues of "Frederica," the Mother of Moses, Benjamin, and the Paul Revere statue, which is in the reading room of the Portland public library.

Nine years ago Congress appropriated the sum of \$60,000 for an equestrian statue of Gen. John A. Logan, to which sum about \$12,000 was added by private contributions. Mr. Simmons was asked to submit a design for the monument which he did, and his design was accepted. After nearly eight years of labor he has completed the work, and according to eminent critics, he has modelled it finer equestrian statue than exists in this country today. This magnificent statue will be dedicated at Washington on Tuesday of this week, in the presence of President McKinley and his cabinet, with officers and distinguished men of the army and navy and distinguished citizens. Gen. G. M. Dodge will open the proceedings at the statue with an address, after which the Rev. F. B. Bristol, pastor of the Metropolitan Methodist Episcopal church, will speak. Mr. Simmons himself will be present and make a short address and Alexander George Tucker, son of Maj. Tucker, U. S. A., and grandson of Gen. Logan, will unveil the statue. Mr. McKinley will then make a short address, followed by the oration of the day by Hon. Chamberlain M. Dole, and a benediction by the Rev. J. C. Butler. The band of the Michigan Infantry will furnish the music. Part of the program

is what this item, we shall be happy to not we can consider it for our purchase, we shall keep the two prints from you. If we find that our purchase, your prints shall be entirely.

U for writing us in this regard.

Yours very truly,

Emile Kuri  
EMILE KURI, Director  
Set Decorating Department

MERIDEN, Conn. (NNS) — A bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln, bought a year ago for \$2, may bring a fortune to junk dealer Chester Orsini.

The 14-inch bust has been recognized as the work of Franklin Simmons, noted American sculptor (1839-1913), who executed 15 public monuments, including statues of Gen. U. S. Grant, Roger Williams and Longfellow. The dealer recently turned down an

offer of \$100 for it, saying he doesn't have much money either, and I wouldn't sell him to be unhappy."

FRANKLIN SIMMONS.

Famous American Sculptor, Native

## AGREEMENT SIGNED ON LINCOLN BUST

HARTFORD, Aug. 9 — (AP) A California barber and a Meriden junkman have joined forces to peddle a bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln, once used as a doortop and now described as a "valuable work of art."

Only Thursday the pair were at odds about the ownership of the 14-inch high bust and the barber had obtained a Superior court temporary injunction to prevent the junkman from selling it.

But Friday all was serene. The men have come to an agreement and are going to act as partners. They will ask Superior court Judge John H. King to dissolve the injunction he had issued earlier in the week.

They have retained David Jacobs of Meriden to represent them in "each and every matter which henceforth may arise in connection with the Lincoln bust."

Fifteen years ago John E. Cantarini, owner of a Meriden barber shop was given the Lincoln bust as a gift. When he moved to California last April, Chester Orsini, 23, a part-time Meriden junk dealers, got the bust with other household furnishings. He took it to New York and had it appraised. The bust was identified as the work of Franklin Simmons, American sculptor who died in 1913. If it can be proven that the bust was executed from life, its value may reach as high as \$100,000.

Langdon's bust is long forgotten here, although in 1901 he returned to this country for a several months' trip, which included a visit to his birthplace in Maine. The city of Portland has two splendid specimens of Simmons' work in the Solider and Longfellow monument.

The Williams statue was completed in Rome in 1870 and now stands in Statuary hall in the Capitol at Washington. Seven years later he completed another statue of Williams, which was unveiled at Providence.

One of his most important monumental works is that of the group on the Naval monument in Washington, in which History is personated standing ready to commit to marble the names of those whom the country desires to immortalize. Another is the equestrian monument of General Logan in Washington. It is estimated that 15 public monuments from his hands stand in various parts of this country.



# Bust of Abe Lincoln Bought for As Junk May Be Worth Fortune

MERIDEN, Conn. (NNS) — A bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln, bought a year ago for \$2, may bring a fortune to junk dealer Chester Orsini.

## TABLE ADDRESS

The 14-inch bust has been recognized as the work of Franklin Simmons, noted American sculptor (1829-1913), who executed 15 public monuments, including statues of Gen. U. S. Grant, Roger Williams and Longfellow. The dealer recently turned down an offer of \$15,000 for the piece.

Orsini said he bought the bust with other junk from a family who were moving out of their home "because I thought it would look nice on my television set."

"A neighbor offered to buy it for \$100, and Orsini took the bust to Sigmund Rothschild, New York art expert, who identified it. If [redacted] proved it was done from [redacted] its value is limited only by the desire and means of a collector anxious to obtain it," Rothschild said.

Orsini said he has received a letter from a niece of Simmons in Illinois, telling him she believes her uncle did the bust from life in Washington in 1885.

What about the people from whom he bought the bust? "Oh, I'm going to give them something," Orsini said. "They

don't have much money either, and I wouldn't [redacted] them to be unhappy."

## FRANKLIN SIMMONS.

Famous American Sculptor, Native of Maine, Dies in Rome.

Rome, Italy, Dec. 9.—Franklin Simmons, a well known American sculptor, died suddenly here, Monday.

Franklin Simmons, thrice decorated by the king of Italy, was regarded the world over as a famous American sculptor, although he lived in Rome for 45 years.

He was born in Webster, Me., Jan. 11, 1839, the son of Loring and Dorothy Batchelder Simmons. While a boy his parents removed to Bath and young Simmons grew up in that city and Lewiston. He attended Bates college, then the Maine state seminary.

When he was 16 years old he taught a writing school for a year and also worked in the mills. Leaving Bates before graduation, he moved to Portland, where he first devoted his time to painting. It was on a visit to Boston that he first became interested in sculpture and turned his attention to that form of art. His success was quite immediate. As it was war time, he removed to Washington, where he had splendid opportunity of making portrait busts of the leading commanders in the Union army, including Generals Grant, Meade, Sheridan, Thomas and Hooker, and Admirals Farragut and Porter. It is estimated that this work numbered about 100 portrait busts in marble.

In 1868, Mr. Simmons received a commission for a statue of Roger Williams. The conditions offered made it possible for him to realize the dream of every young sculptor, a visit to Rome. That visit was lengthened into a long residence there; although in 1907 he returned to this country for a several months' trip, which included a visit to his birthplace in Maine. The city of Portland has now two splendid specimens of Simmons' work in the Soldiers and Longfellow monument.

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purchase, your prints shall be  
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u for writing us in this regard.

Yours very truly,

*Emile Kuri*

EMILE KURI, Director  
Set Decorating Department



John Hay Library

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I could but fail interested  
in this statue for which  
I am so well supplied with  
material. But instead  
of having had an opportunity  
to make a statue of Lincoln  
which I was so well qualified  
to do I have been asked  
to make statues of men whom  
I have never seen like  
Gov. Morton of Ind. and  
others and although they  
have given satisfaction  
the task was not so cau-  
gious as it would be in  
this case.

Hoping to hear from you  
I am sincerely yours

Franklin Simmons

C/o Sebasti & Reali  
20 Piazza di Spagna  
Rome.





Sculptor

*Frances Benjamin (1869 or 65)*

PHOTOGRAPH BY  
ROBERT J. MURRAY

180 PARKER AVENUE  
MERIDEN, CONNECTICUT

# CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NORTH AVENUE AT CLARK STREET • CHICAGO 14 ILLINOIS

MICHIGAN 2-4600

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*President*

Hermon Dunlap Smith

July 14, 1952

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Sterling Morton

Andrew McNally III

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Herbert Stuart Stone, Jr.

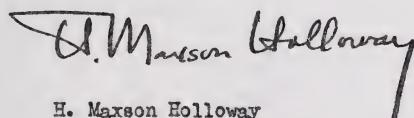
Mr. Chester Orsine  
142 Carter Avenue - Avenue Extension  
Meriden, Connecticut

Dear Mr. Orsine:

The Society wishes to extend its sincere thanks to you for the three photographs of Abraham Lincoln by Franklin Simons. They will be a valuable addition to our Lincoln file of pictures.

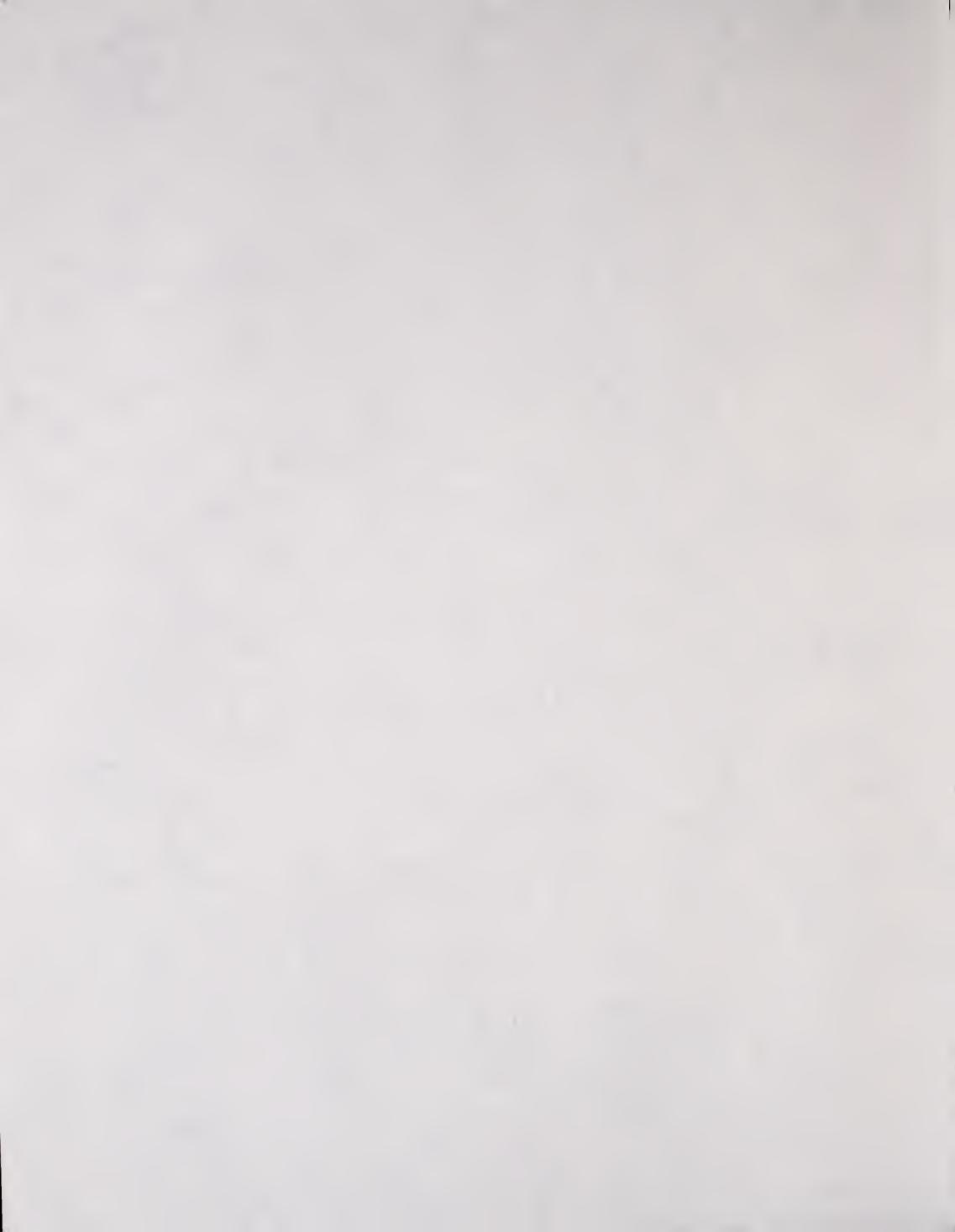
With kindest regards.

Sincerely yours,



H. Maxson Holloway  
Curator





# UNCOVER RARE LINCOLN BUST BOUGHT AS JUNK

## Owner Tells of Offer of \$15,000

An unknown bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln, found in an old house in Meriden, Conn., could bring a sizeable sum to the young junkman who owns it and be an important, if perhaps controversial, addition to Lincolniana.

The bust, temporarily kept in a vault in the First National Bank of Chicago, was brought here by Chester Orsine, 29 year old Meriden junk dealer and war veteran, on advice of an attorney who counseled bringing it "to the heart of the Lincoln" country to sell it.

Orsine acquired the bust, about 14 inches high, a year ago when he was called to buy "a pile of junk" in an old Meriden home whose owners were moving. He liked the work, so he took it home and put it atop his television set. Some friends also liked it, for several wanted to buy it.

### Took It To Appraiser

Frequently, says' Orsine, he would remark to his wife, "That bust is worth a lot of money." His wife advised him to quit day dreaming. When one friend offered \$100 for it, Orsine said he decided to take it to New York and find out if it was valuable.

In New York, Sigmund Rothschild, an art dealer and restorer, declared the work to be "completely unique and original." Rothschild declared its value limited only by the desire and means of a collector anxious to obtain it.

The bust carries the name of William Miller and Company, Metallists, of Providence, R. I., and lists F. Simmons as the sculptor. Franklin Simmons was a well known sculptor born in 1839 in Webster, Me., who died in 1913. Rothschild told him that Simmons worked in Washington during 1864 and 1865, and executed several busts and statues while there. Rothschild said the bust was cast in 1865, since that was the only year that Miller and his partner, Walter S. Dennis, were in business together.

Orsine, who says he has received one offer of \$15,000 for the bust, has showed it to several universities. They all would like to have

it but can't meet any such offer, said Orsine.

### Factor in Its Value

That is the case with the Chicago Historical museum, where the curator, H. Maxson Holloway, said the bust was "very nice and we'd like to have it as a gift, but we're not in a position to offer any such money for it."

A factor that may have a considerable bearing on the value of the bust is whether it was executed from life, with Lincoln sitting for the sculptor. As far as is known, said Holloway, the only life bust of Lincoln was executed in 1860 by Leonard Volk of Chicago. Lincoln then was beardless. He didn't start growing whiskers until he won the Republican nomination for President.

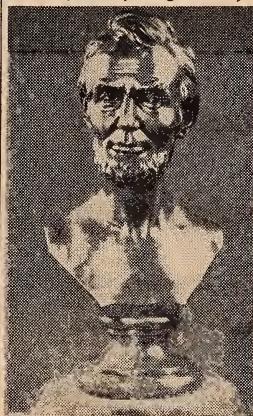
Ralph Newman, another Chicago expert on Lincolniana, pronounced the bust "darn nice and very interesting." He said, however, that Simmons probably did not execute it from life, and that many such busts had been made from photographs."

### Called Interesting

"I don't think it adds anything historically or artistically to the

### Lincoln Bust Found

(Story in adjoining column)



[TRIBUNE Photo]

Bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln which was found in Meriden, Conn.

Lincoln story, tho it is an interesting piece," said Newman.

The bust was placed in a bank vault on the advice of Floyd F. Shields, attorney at 111 W. Washington st., to whom Orsine was referred by a friend in Meriden. If the bust is sold, Orsine plans to expand his junk business and buy some real estate.

CHICAGO DAILY TRIBUNE

Monday, July 21, 1952

Part 1—Page 18 H

\$100,000 Junk?

## Bust of Lincoln

### Sold for \$25

MERIDEN, Conn., Aug. 2 (UP).  
A BRONZE bust of Abraham Lincoln, bought by a junk dealer for \$25, was being studied by art experts today in the belief it may be worth as much as \$100,000.

Chester Orsini paid \$25 for the 14-inch bust "because I thought it would look nice on my television set."

Antique dealers soon began calling on Orsini. Bids for the bust climbed as high as \$15,000, he said.

The 29-year-old junk dealer asked Sigmund Rothschild, the art collector, to help identify the bust. It was decided that it had been done in 1864 or 1865 by Franklin Simmons of Webster, Me.

IF THE bust was done from life, it may be worth as much as \$100,000, Orsini quoted Rothschild as saying. There is only one bust of Lincoln done from life in existence.

Simmons was known to have been working in Washington at the time the bust was cast, Orsini said.

He said art dealers and Lincoln experts from coast to coast had contacted him about the bust. But Orsini said he isn't in the selling mood—yet.

# Rare Bust Of Lincoln Found Here May Be Worth \$15,000

*Chester Orsini  
Says Bought It  
In Junk Saie*

A bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln, found in the cellar of a house here by a local youth buying junk, has art experts in the mid-West excited and may bring \$15,000 or more to the local man.

The Meriden man is Chester Orsini, 29, of 142 Carter Avenue



Lincoln Bust

extension, and he found the bust over a year ago in the cellar of a home here.

He first dumped it in his load but later liked the looks of it and took it home. After polishing it up he placed it on his television set.

He told his wife he thought it "worth a lot of money" but the matter was forgotten until a visitor, seeing it, offered \$25 for it. Later the man returned and raised the offer to \$100 and Orsini thought he had something.

He consulted a local lawyer and was advised to see Sigmund Rothschild, famous New York art dealer. Rothschild said it was an original and thought it might be worth as much as \$25,000 but advised trying to sell it in "heart of the Lincoln country."

The bust carries the name of William Miller and Company, metallist of Providence, R. I., and

must have been cast in 1865, according to the art expert, who said that this was the only year that Miller and his partner, Walter S. Dennis, were in business together.

On the back of the bust the name of the sculptor is listed as F. Simmons. Webster's Biographical Dictionary lists Franklin Simmons as born in Webster, Maine, in 1839, dying in 1913. He had studios in Maine and among his works are equestrian statues and busts of Grant, Sherman, etc.

Simmons worked in Washington in 1864 and 1865 and executed several busts and statues while there. Mr. Rothschild said the value of the bust was only limited by the desire and means of a collector who wanted it.

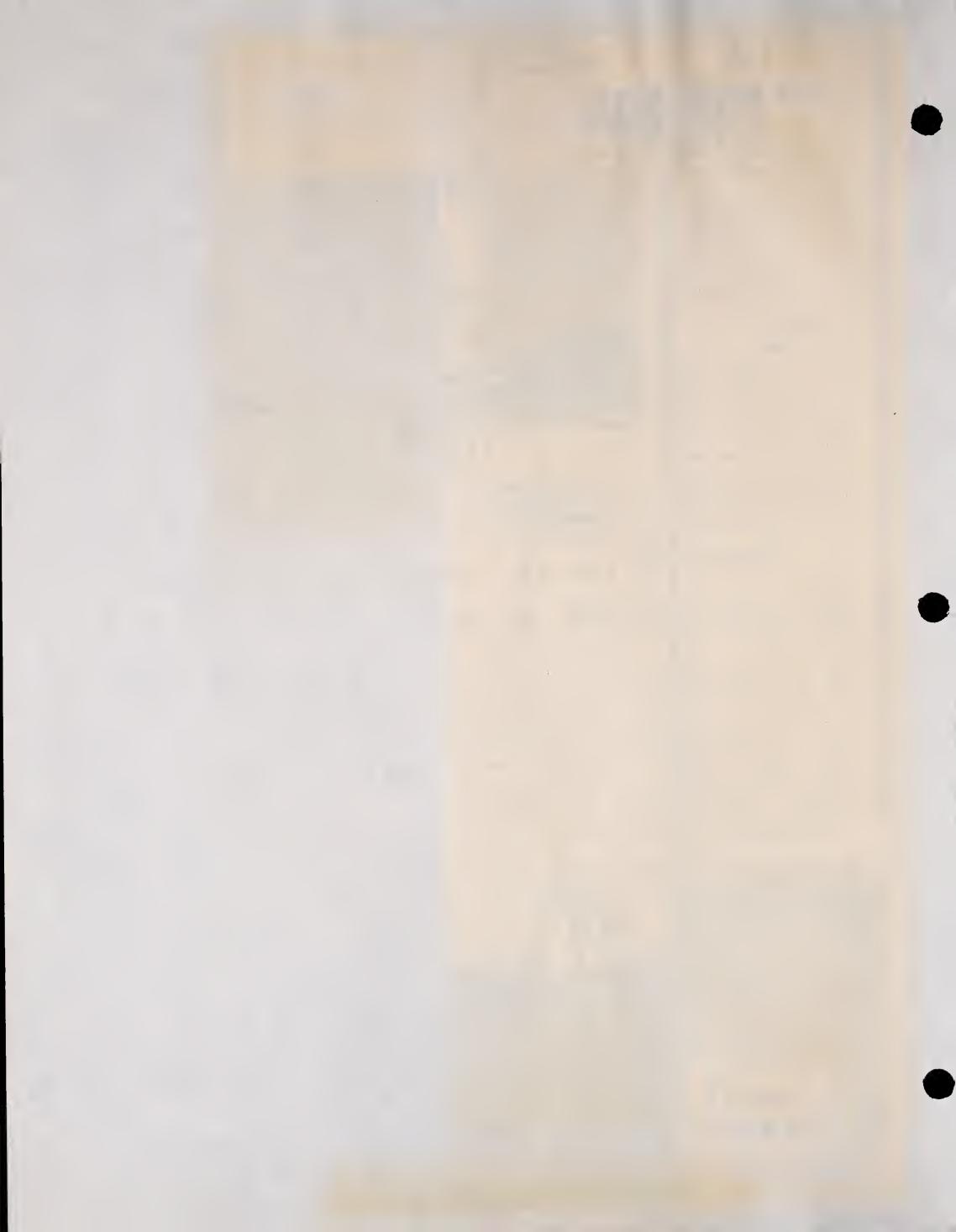
Orsini went to Chicago with the bust and said he had an offer from one college of \$15,000 if subscriptions can be secured to raise the money. Other colleges were interested.

At the Chicago Historical Museum the curator, H. Maxson Holloway, said that he wanted the bust as a gift but that the museum was not in a position to offer \$15,000 for it.

The New York art dealer thought the bust was done from life in Washington but some mid-west experts thought it might have been from a photograph, which would reduce its value.

Through a Meriden lawyer, Orsini got in touch with Floyd F. Shields, Chicago attorney, who is handling the sale and said it might take some time. The bust has been placed in a bank vault in Chicago under care of Mr. Shields.

The Chicago Tribune on July 21 carried a full account of the Meriden man's find under the heading "Uncover Rare Lincoln Bust" and also published a photograph of the bust.



# ● Buys Bust of Lincoln For \$2; May Get 100G

By News

Meriden, Conn., Aug. 3 (UPI).—A bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln, bought by a junk dealer for \$2, was being studied by art experts today in the belief it may be worth as much as \$100,000.

Chester Orsini paid \$2 for the 14-inch bust "because I thought it would look nice on my television set."

Antique dealers soon began calling on Orsini and bids for the bust climbed as high as \$15,000, he said.

The 29-year-old junk dealer asked Sigmund Rothschild, the art collector, to help identify the bust. It was decided that it had been done in 1864 or 1865 by Franklin Simmons of Webster, Maine.

## Only One Known.

If the bust was done from life, it may be worth as much as \$100,000, Orsini quoted Rothschild as saying. There is only one other bust of Lincoln done from life in existence.

Simmons was known to have been working in Washington at the time the bust was cast, Orsini said.

## Lincoln Bust in Junk May Be Worth Fortune

Meriden, Conn., Aug. 4—(AP)—A bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln, picked up by a junk dealer in a cluttered cellar, now may be worth a modest fortune to him.

Chester Orsini, 29-year-old veteran of World War II, found the tarnished bust a year ago, polished it up and put it on his television set. Several offers to buy it prompted Orsini to look into its value.

Sigmund Rothschild, New York art dealer and appraiser, said the bust was an original by Franklin Simmons and would be worth as much as \$25,000 "in the heart of the Lincoln country" in the mid-west. Art records show that Simmons worked in Washington, D. C., in 1864 and 1865 where he did several busts and statues.

AUG 3 - 1952

# Junked Lincoln Bust Valued at \$100,000

MERIDEN, Conn., Aug. 9—(UP)—A California barber and a Meriden junk dealer teamed up today to find how much they can get for a "worthless" bust of Abraham Lincoln which art experts believe may be worth \$100,000.

Barber John E. Cantanari obtained the 14-inch bust, which weighs 22 pounds, in 1937. It was used as a doorstop. Last April the Cantanari family sold their household furnishings to junk dealer Chester Orsini, 29, when they moved to California.

Orsini liked the bronze bust because "it would look good on my television set." He paid about \$25 for it.

Cantanari claimed the junk dealer came in possession of the bust by mistake.

Antique dealers heard about the bust. They made offers that reached as high as \$15,000 but Orsini, sensing he had something big, refused to sell.

Orsini conferred with New York art expert Sigmund Rothschild who said the bust apparently was done from real life by Franklin Simmons around 1865.

"Its value would be limited only by the desire and means of a collector anxious to obtain it," Rothschild said. He added Orsini may be able to get as much as \$100,000 for it.

The junk dealer sent the bust to the Chicago Historical Society for further examination.

Meantime, Orsini received a letter from a niece of Simmons which said she believed her uncle did the bust in Washington in 1865.

Cantanari read newspaper accounts of the bust and immediately obtained an injunction restraining the junk dealer from selling the piece. They now have agreed to act as partners and Cantanari plans to ask the judge to withdraw the injunction.

Common Name  
Dwarf-Blu by Mo

Day  
of Bloom

Common Name

Day of Bloom

## Lincoln Bust Costing \$2 May Yield A Fortune

Special to The SUN-TIMES

MERIDEN, Conn. — A bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln, bought for \$2, may bring a fortune to Chester Orsini, 29-year-old junk dealer.

The 14-inch bust has been recognized as the work of Franklin Simmons, noted American sculptor (1839-1913), who executed 15 public monuments, including statues of U.S. Grant, Roger Williams and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The lucky dealer recently turned down an offer of \$15,000 for the piece.

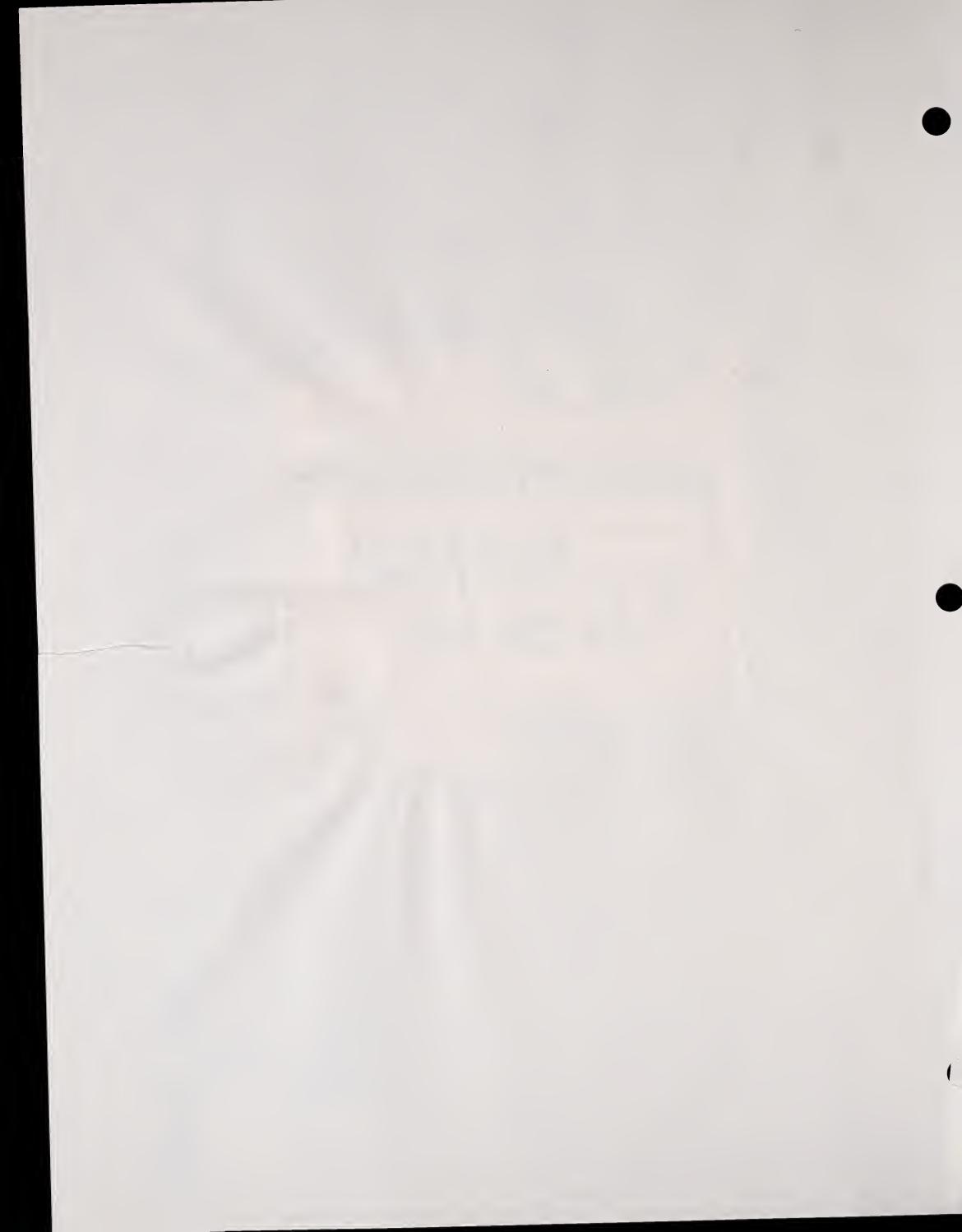
Orsini said he bought the bust from people who were moving out

of a house "because I thought it would look nice on my television set." Later he took it to Sigmund Rothschild, New York art expert and restorer, who identified it as a Simmons piece.

In a letter to Orsini, the expert described it as "a work of art," and if it can be proved that it was done from life "its value is limited only by the desire and means of a collector anxious to obtain it."

Orsini is holding on to the bust until it is established whether it was executed from life. He has an attorney collecting data on the subject. He has already received a letter from a niece of Simmons in Illinois, he said, telling him that she believes her uncle did the bust from life in Washington in 1865.

Asked what he intended to do with his expected bonanza, Orsini said that he planned "really to set myself up in the junk business."



# Orsini Agrees To Share Lincoln Bust Proceeds With Former Local Barber

A former Meriden barber, now a resident of Rivera, Calif., and a local junkman last night joined forces to sell a bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln, believed to be valued up to \$100,000.

In a joint statement issued last night, John A. Cantarini, who until last April conducted a barbershop at 500 West Main Street, and Chester C. Orsini, of 142, Carter Avenue Extension, designated Attorney David H. Jacobs, of this city, as their official representative and spokesman in the sale of the bust, which is rising in value ever since it was discovered to be the probable original work of Franklin Simmons, who died in 1913.

Orsini acquired the bust last April when Cantarini and his wife left the city to live in Rivera. He claimed it was considered valueless and acquired it for very little money along with other discarded items.

## Injunction Sought

But Cantarini, who flew across the country and arrived in Meriden Wednesday, immediately moved to have Orsini enjoined from selling the bust.

He retained Mr. Jacobs and Thursday afternoon Judge John H. King signed a temporary injunction restraining Orsini from disposing of the work of art. Service was made on Orsini by Deputy County Sheriff Abe Hurwitz, but the official papers were not filed in the clerk's office in the New Haven Superior Court.

Orsini conferred with Cantarini yesterday and by evening all was serene. Mr. Jacobs announced that the temporary injunction would be officially withdrawn today since the two "had reached an agreement" and "no dispute exists between them."

Cantarini claimed that he owned the bust for 15 years, that it was given to him by a friend. He described it as 12 inches high, eight inches wide and weighed 20 pounds. He claimed there "is no known duplicate" of the likeness of the Great Emancipator.

He said when he moved to Rivera, he thought his wife packed it, and his wife believed he packed the object. However, upon arrival at their new home on the west coast, the bust was not to be found.

## Believed Lost

He telephoned local friends and



Bust Found Here

relatives, but none knew of its whereabouts, and the bust was given up for lost until he read in the newspapers that Orsini had had it appraised and that it was found to be of great value.

Orsini said, when the news of the value of the bust was published about a week ago, that he acquired it for a few dollars in buying discarded junk, and that it was the weight which intrigued him. He polished the bronze piece and put it in his living room.

The anxiety of an antique dealer to purchase it gave him the idea that it might have value, he said. He was offered \$25 for the bust, and when he declined to sell, the dealer increased the offer substantially.

## Had It Appraised

He went to Sigmund Rothschild, New York art dealer, to have the bust examined and it was the New (Continued on Page 5)

Yorker who said that if the work was done from life and not copied from a photograph, then the work of art is priceless. He said there was no known market value, that it would bring whatever a dealer, collector or museum wanted to offer for it.

The story of the find was given widespread publicity, spreading out so that Cantarini discovered the whereabouts of the bust he originally owned.

The official statement issued last night follows:

"It was announced by John E. Cantarini, formerly of Meriden, and now of Rivera, California, and Chester C. Orsini, of this city, that David H. Jacobs, local lawyer, has been retained by them with respect to each and every matter which may henceforth arise in connection with the 'Lincoln Bust' the details of which recently appeared in the public press. It has also been announced that an agreement has been reached between them and that no dispute exists between them. Henceforth, all public statement concerning the 'Lincoln Bust' will be made directly by Mr. Jacobs, our legal representative, who is the only one authorized to speak or act in our behalf."





THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

REFERENCE DEPARTMENT  
MANUSCRIPTS DIVISION

February 10, 1953

Dear Mr. Orsini:

Thank you for the opportunity you have given me to read the two letters which Emily J. (Libbey) Simmons (Mrs. Franklin Simmons) wrote from Washington to her cousin, Mrs. S. C. Libbey, of Saco, Maine, on April 7, and May 8, 1865. As eye-witness accounts of events connected with the closing days of the Civil War these are moving documents.

Upon referring to the files, I find that the letters are not unknown to us. Nearly a year ago, the Assistant Chief of our Exchange and Gift Division, informed the previous owner of the letters, Miss Ethel E. Johnson, of Belchertown, Massachusetts, that the Library "would be delighted to have them as gifts for the Library's manuscript collections." I am happy to give you the same assurance.

With best wishes,

Faithfully yours,

*David C. Mearns*  
David C. Mearns  
Chief  
Manuscripts Division

Mr. Chester C. Orsini  
142 Carter Avenue Extension  
Meriden, Connecticut





THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

August 6, 1953

REFERENCE DEPARTMENT  
MANUSCRIPTS DIVISION

Dear Mr. Orsini:

Upon my return from a brief vacation I was disappointed to learn that I had missed a visit from you. I would like to have had that opportunity to be brought up-to-date on your researches.

I have, however, had an opportunity to examine the Simmons' bust. It is, as you know so well, a very pleasing likeness. One day, perhaps, it should adorn a gallery or museum; but after consulting Mr. Stern we are agreed that it is distinctly inappropriate to a library where the collections are properly and necessarily predominantly composed of books and manuscripts rather than original works of art. I trust that you will soon succeed in finding a suitable repository for this interesting object.

Meanwhile what are your wishes? Will you call for it in person, or shall we ship it to you by express?

Faithfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "David C. Mearns".

David C. Mearns  
Chief  
Manuscripts Division

Mr. Chester Orsini  
Meriden  
Connecticut



# CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NORTH AVENUE AT CLARK STREET • CHICAGO 14, ILLINOIS

MICHIGAN 2-4600



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October 9, 1953

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Hermon Dunlap Smith

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Theodore Tieken

Mr. Chester Orsine  
142 Carter Avenue, Ext.  
Meriden, Connecticut

Dear Mr. Orsine:

Your price for the Lincoln bust by Franklin Simmons is far beyond our own resources and I am sorry to say I do not know anyone who would be interested in contributing this sum for this purpose. I realize that the bust is a desirable piece, but it is one that we shall have to do without.

Sincerely yours,

*Paul M. Angle*





# WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS

2400 WEST ALAMEDA AVE. • BURBANK, CALIFORNIA • CABLE ADDRESS: DISNEY

March 18, 1958

Mr. Chester Orsini  
79 Skyline Drive  
Meriden, Connecticut

Dear Mr. Orsini:

Thank you for your letter and the two prints of the Simmons bust of Lincoln, which you offer for sale.

We are planning an addition to Disneyland sometime in the future that has a historical theme and which will include memorabilia of all of the Presidents of the United States and it is possible that the bust of Lincoln would make a very worthwhile addition to this display.

If you will be kind enough to let us know what value you place upon this item, we shall be happy to inform you whether or not we can consider it for our purposes. In the meantime, we shall keep the two prints until we hear further from you. If we find that our budget does not allow this purchase, your prints shall be returned to you immediately.

Again thank you for writing us in this regard.

Yours very truly,

*Emile Kuri*

EMILE KURI, Director  
Set Decorating Department

EK:tsj



B R O W N   U N I V E R S I T Y  
THE LIBRARY  
PROVIDENCE 12, RHODE ISLAND

John Hay Library

May 9, 1958

Mr. Chester Orsine  
Rear 27 Parkview Avenue  
Meriden, Connecticut

Dear Mr. Orsine:

We recently purchased at auction a collection of letters concerning the Lincoln Monument which was erected in Lincoln, Nebraska. In the collection were two letters by Franklin Simmons to the Honorable Addison Wait.

I have photoprints made of these two letters which I am enclosing to you. I think that you may find these of interest in connection with your head of Lincoln which was sculptured by Simmons. In exchange for these photostats perhaps you will be willing to let me have photostats of your letters.

Sincerely,

*David A. Jonch*  
Librarian



SIGMUND ROTHSCHILD  
115 WEST 57TH STREET, NEW YORK 19, N.Y.

Rome Aug 4 1908

Hon. A. Wait-

Sec Abraham Lincoln  
Memorium Association

Dear Sir.

I have seen it - stated that you are the Secy of an Association formed for the purpose of erecting a statue of Pres. Lincoln.

This project interests me for several reasons which I will explain.

1st. I knew President Lincoln and so far as I know am the only American sculptor who remembers him.

I spent the winter of 1864 & '65 in Washington and met the Pres. a number of times and heard him from the balcony of the White House at the close of the War, when he addressed

SAVE THE EAST BUY U.S. BONDS PAYROLL SAVING



EDWARD ROTHSCHILD

Hon Addieord Wail -  
See, Lincoln Mu. Association  
Lincoln Nebr.

Dear Sir: I was pleased to receive your letter of Aug 13 and to know that my letter was acceptable. It was interesting & nice to hear that we both met Pres. Lincoln at about the same time. Those were great days in the history of our country which we will never forget.

I don't know if you were in Washington at the

BY THE EAST WAY  
U.S. BONDS ON  
ROLL SAVINGS



July 18, 1973

# THE LINCOLN CLUB OF ORANGE COUNTY

Mr. Chester Orsini  
Pine Maple Arms, Inc.  
79 Skyline Drive  
Meriden, Conn. 06450

Dear Mr. Orsini:

We were pleased to receive your complimentary letter of June 28th, together with the beautiful picture of the Franklin Simmon's sculptured bust of Abraham Lincoln.

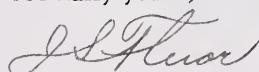
I am having it mounted in a suitable frame which will adorne my office, since the Lincoln Club does not have a headquarters.

Whoever succeeds me as president will be presented the picture for his office and so will be passed on to future Lincoln Club Presidents.

Your thoughtfullness and generosity was appreciated by our board of directors which have had their regular monthly meeting last Saturday.

With kindest personal regards, I am.

Cordially yours,



J. S. Fluor  
President

JSF:bp

cc: A. O. Beckman  
Robert Beaver

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HARRY S. RINKER  
ALEX ROBERTSON, JR.

DIRECTOR EMERITUS  
WALTER KNOTT

Address: Post Office Box 3113, Fullerton, California 92634



# PORLAND MUSEUM OF ART

111 HIGH STREET PORTLAND, MAINE 04101 TELEPHONE 207 775-6148

28 September 1977

Dear Mr. Orsini,

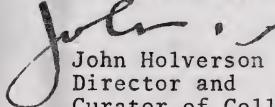
Thank you for your letter of 21 September with the enclosed original manuscript letter from Mrs. Franklin B. Simmons (Ella) to her cousin Sarah, from Venice, dated 10 July 1871. It is good to hear from you again and to have such a delightful addition to our growing collection of Simmons material. Thank you very much for your thoughtfulness. When the letter is catalogued, we will be sending a formal deed of gift.

In the meantime, you will be interested to learn that we have acquired a larger than life marble bust by Simmons, modelled from life, as well as a plaster bust of Grant by Simmons, dated 1866. With our full size figure, we are about complete when it comes to General Grant.

I look forward to hearing about the other Simmons letters you are pursuing. As you may know, your letter relates wonderfully to an old photograph of Mr. and Mrs. Simmons in a gondola in the Bacino di San Marco, which came from other descendants.

Thank you again for your gift.

Yours with best wishes,



John Holverson  
Director and  
Curator of Collections

Mr. Chester Orsini  
Pine Maple Arms, Inc.  
79 Skyline Drive  
Meriden, Connecticut 06450

JH:jm



This 48-page biography of sculptor Franklin Simmons is available in the Lincoln Library at the Allen County Public Library, Fort Wayne Indiana.

## FRANKLIN SIMMONS

for the

Portland Museum of Art

Pamela W. Hawkes

December 1975





# Pine Maple Arms, Inc.

79 Skyline Drive  
Meriden, Connecticut 06450

ALSO SEE OVERSIZE PRINT  
FOR LARGE COLOR PICTURE

December 2, 1978

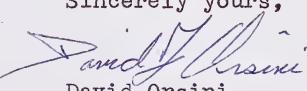
Dear Sir:

Enclosed you will find a portrait of a bust of Abraham Lincoln and a brochure on the Franklin Simmons bust of Lincoln. In this brochure you will find literature describing the bust briefly and two letters of documents dating back to 1865, which I have in my possession at this time.

For any further information concerning the Bust of Lincoln, please contact me at my place of business:

2nd Level Restaurant  
975 Broad Street  
Meriden, Connecticut 06450  
Telephone - 203-238-4481

Sincerely yours,

  
David Orsini

DO:va  
Enclosure



*"completely unique and original"*

... Sigmund Rothschild

New York Art Dealer and Restorer

## The

### FRANKLIN

### SIMMONS

### Bust of Lincoln

"... an excellent piece of work. ... We have here at Lincoln University what is likely the third largest collection of Lincolniana in the entire country. ... we have many fine pieces of statuary work... however, I do not believe that we have any that equal in excellence this fine work by Simmons."

... R. Gerald McMurry, Director of

Lincolniana

Lincoln Memorial University

"historic work of art"

... Conrad L. Wirth, Director  
National Park Service,  
U.S. Dept. of Interior

"it should adorn a gallery or museum"

... David C. Mearns  
The Library of Congress



1865

Authenticated

The Only One of Its Kind In Existence

TEXT BY

KENNETH BARNARD

PRINTED BY  
THE TIMES PRESS

WAKEFIELD, RHODE ISLAND

## FRANKLIN SIMMONS BUST OF LINCOLN

The dramatic discovery in 1952 of the Franklin Simmons bust of Lincoln was attended by publicity throughout the world. While purchasing household possessions in a Meriden, Connecticut residence, Mr. Chester Orsini noticed the bust, which was being used as a doorstop and children's plaything.

Thinking that it could be cleaned and then placed atop his television set, Mr. Orsini purchased it for two dollars. Aware of the bust's beauty after it had been refurbished, Mr. Orsini often commented to his wife that he wouldn't be surprised to learn that the object had considerable value.

When a friend offered him a hundred dollars for his likeness of Lincoln, its owner determined to ascertain the true worth of the bust. Then began an intensive, costly program of research which at one point even required Mr. Orsini to sell his car in order to finance the investigation.

Art dealers and Lincoln scholars confirmed the fact that he possessed a rare art object, a bust of the sixteenth President executed in 1865 by a famous American sculptor.

An entrancing piece of sculpture radiating grace and strength, it stands fourteen inches high and weighs approximately twenty-two pounds. Cast in gilded bronze, it bears on the back this inscription:

W. M. MILLER & CO. METALLISTS  
PROVIDENCE, R. I.  
F. SIMMONS SCULPT.

The year 1865, incidentally, is the only year that Miller and his partner, Walter S. Dennis, were in business together.

Franklin Simmons (1839-1913) was born in Webster, Maine, an eighth generation descendant of John and Priscilla Alden. At various times he resided in Lewiston, Portland, Providence, Washington, and Rome, living for forty-five years in the Italian capital and dying there.

He spent his boyhood in Bath, Maine and attended Lewiston Falls Academy and the Maine State Seminary (later Bates College). Eventually Bates, Bowdoin and Colby Colleges conferred honorary degrees upon him. As a sculptor, he was partly self-taught and did his first serious modeling in Lewiston while working in a mill. He continued his artistic application in the Boston studio of John Adams Jackson.

Simmons married twice, first on December 27, 1864 to Emily J. Libbey of Auburn, Maine, who died in 1872. On June 9, 1892 he married the Baroness von Jensen, the daughter of John F. Shocum of Providence. She died in 1905. There were no children.

The sculptor lived in Washington during 1865 and 1866, and Mr. Orsini now owns two interesting and valuable letters written in the former year by the first Mrs. Simmons to a cousin in Maine. In the first letter, dated April 7, 1865, she shows a spirit of exhilaration prompted by news of the fall of Richmond.

Writing a week before Lincoln's assassination, she describes, with unwitting prophecy, the recent inauguration as a scene "where Abraham was going not to offer sacrifice, but to himself the offering." She numbers herself and her husband among the privileged few who shook hands with the "Illinois joker" as she labels Lincoln in quotation marks. Near the end of a letter that is brimming with fascinating details of wartime Washington, she says: "Mr. Simmons is now modelling Gen'l Ricketts—he has finished Seward & Chase & others. He will get Lincoln's as soon as he can give sittings. I don't know when that will be."

The second letter, composed on May 8, is heavy with the feeling of loss following Lincoln's death, and, like the one referred to above, is interesting for its sense of drama and eye-witness particularity. The Simmonses lived very close to Ford's Theatre, the backyard of their house opening onto the alley in the rear of the theatre where Booth escaped. In this document she tells of her husband's busy work in a fine studio in 'Studio

Building', and adds, "He is at present modelling a bust of Pres Lincoln—has modelled two medallions of him since his death."

She refers to the Thursday-night celebration of Lee's surrender and notes, "Mr. S. was at the White House that morning and had an interview with Lincoln and made arrangements for him to sit the following week, but, Alas—that following week—he was borne on his way to the tomb."

Franklin Simmons executed statues of Generals Grant and Sherman and Admiral Farragut, to mention only a few of the Civil War heroes who were his subjects for marble and bronze representations. His statues of Roger Williams stand in Roger Williams Park in Providence, and Statuary Hall in Washington. His art pieces are famous throughout the world and include a bust of Adlai E. Stevenson, a Vice President and grandfather of this decade's Presidential candidate for the Democratic Party in two campaigns.

The Simmons statue of General John A. Logan, created in Italy, was the first one seen in America and Italy that was fashioned entirely of bronze—that is, both statue and pedestal. In recognition of the sculptor's artistry, King Humbert of Italy knighted Simmons in 1898.

The most recent public display of the handsome bust of Lincoln was its appearance, under Pinkerton guard, in the lobby of the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco during the 1956 Republican convention.

That the Lincoln bust is an art treasure with great appeal to art collectors and historians has been fully demonstrated by the interest that marked its discovery in 1952. At this time the owner of it wishes to announce that he is making the unique Franklin Simmons bust of Abraham Lincoln available for acquisition by a private collector or an institution. Inquiries should be addressed to:

Mr. Chester Orsini  
79 Skyline Drive  
Meriden, Connecticut

Simmons Franklin

DRAWER 22

SCULPTORS - S  
(BUSTS)

